



# Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park

## Yurt Rentals – Snow Season

*Great Lakes, Great Times, Great Outdoors*

[www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)

### INTRODUCTION

This manual provides you with important information concerning snow season (Dec. 1- April 30) rental of the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park yurt system. It is essential that all members of your party read this information before embarking on a tour to any of the park's yurts. In winter, any backcountry travel by ski, snowshoe or on foot can be dangerous. **You are responsible for yourself and your group's safety.**

### TRIP PLANNING

Carefully read this material and evaluate the abilities of yourself and your party. If you feel confident that you have the skills and knowledge to undertake a yurt tour safely, follow these steps:

- Make reservations by calling 800-44-PARKS or online at: [www.midnrreservations.com/](http://www.midnrreservations.com/)
- Park maps and additional information can be obtained online at: [www.mi.gov/porkies](http://www.mi.gov/porkies)
- Call the park at (906) 885-5275 with questions you have.
- Make sure everyone in your party is properly prepared, including the possibility of spending the night outdoors.
- Before leaving, always tell a friend or relative where you are going, what route you will travel and when you plan to return.
- Know the weather forecast. Wilderness travel is not recommended during severe winter weather or at night.

### ROUTES TO YURT

- Pedestrian traffic and snowmobiles do not mix; **Do Not Ski, Snowshoe or Walk on Snowmobile Trails.**
- Go on a day trip to familiarize yourself with surrounding landmarks and learn way-finding tricks that will help you locate the yurt again. If you have any doubt of your way-finding skills, do not go.
- Before attempting any yurt tour you should be experienced in the use of a map and compass, and carry both with you on the trip.
- Use common sense and err on the safe side. Keep your party together. Turn back if the weather closes in or visibility becomes difficult. The yurt will be there for you to visit another day.
- Always be prepared. If for some reason you don't find the yurt, carry the equipment and clothing necessary to spend the night outdoors.
- **Never travel alone.**

#### **Little Union Yurt – Located off of the River Trail cross country ski trail, suggested routes:**

**Route #1:** Park your vehicle at the ski area upper lot, follow the Nonesuch Trail (which begins at the east end of the upper parking lot) to the junction with the River Trail (a distance of 2 km/1.25 miles), follow the River Trail loop to the Union Spring Trailhead (a distance of 3.5 km/2.2 miles if you turn left and follow the River Trail loop clockwise, or a distance of 5 km/3.1 miles if you turn right and follow the River Trail loop counter-clockwise), at the Union Spring Trailhead follow the signs to Little Union Yurt, which is 0.8 km/0.5 miles south of the trailhead.

**Route #2:** Park your vehicle at the designated area at the Park Headquarters and follow the interpretive trail (which is ungroomed) to the River Trail loop (a distance of 1 km/0.6 miles), from here follow the River Trail loop to the Union Spring Trailhead (a distance of 3 km/1.8 miles if you turn left on the River Trail loop and follow it clockwise, or 5.5 km/3.4 miles if you turn right on the River Trail loop and follow it counter-clockwise), at the Union Spring Trailhead follow the signs to Little Union Yurt, which is 0.8 km/0.5 miles south of the trailhead.

#### **West Vista Yurt – Located off of the West Vista cross country ski trail, suggested routes:**

**Route #1:** Park your vehicle at the ski area upper lot and follow the Nonesuch Trail (which begins at the east end of the upper parking lot) to the junction with the River Trail (a distance of 2 km/1.25 miles), turn right on River Trail and proceed to the junction with the Union Spring Trail (a distance of 3 km/1.8 miles), turn right on the Union Spring Trail and follow it to the junction with the Double Trail (a distance of 2.5 km/1.6 miles), follow the Double Trail uphill to the West Vista Trail (a distance of 1 km/0.6 miles), follow the West Vista Trail to the yurt, which is marked by signs (a distance of 1 km/0.6 miles).

**Route #2:** Park your vehicle at the designated area at the Park Headquarters, follow the interpretive trail (which is ungroomed) to the River Trail (1 km/0.6 miles), turn right on River Trail and follow to junction with Nonesuch Trail (a distance of 0.5 km/0.3 miles), turn left (uphill) and continue following the River Trail to the junction with the Union Spring Trail (a distance of 3 km/1.8 miles), turn right on the Union Spring Trail and follow it to the junction with Double Trail (a distance of 2.5 km/1.6 miles), turn right on the Double Trail and follow it uphill to the junction with the West Vista Trail (a distance of 1 km/0.6 miles), follow the West Vista Trail to the yurt, which is marked by signs, (a distance of 1 km/0.6 miles).

**Route #3:** Park your vehicle at upper lot of the ski area, pick up the Big Hemlock Trail cross country ski trail by crossing in front of the chalet and continuing west; the trail begins just downhill from the loading area of the double chairlift. Follow the Big Hemlock Trail all the way around the mountain to the junction with the Double Trail (a distance of 7.25 km/4.5 miles), turn left on the Double Trail and follow it uphill to the junction with the West Vista Trail (a distance of 1 km/0.6 miles), follow the West Vista Trail to the yurt, which is marked by signs (a distance of 1 km/0.6 miles).

**Lost Creek Yurt** – This yurt is located off of the Lost Lake hiking trail on the east side of Lost Creek. Winter access to this yurt is very difficult, requiring a strenuous ski or snowshoe journey of approximately 14 km/9 miles. **Winter travel to the Lost Creek yurt requires physical stamina, specialized equipment, and expert way-finding and winter survival skills. Due to deep snow and steep hills, only expert backcountry skiers and snowshoers should attempt to travel to the Lost Creek yurt.**

The route suggested below includes 4.5 km/2.8 miles of travel on designated cross country ski trails, which may be packed and groomed, and 9 km/5.6 miles of travel on hiking trails which will not be packed or groomed for winter use and which will have few, if any, trail tags or trail signs visible. Due to weather and other conditions, you may not be able to identify or follow the suggested route. **Be prepared for cross-country travel in the event you lose the trail or cannot find the trail. Be prepared with the necessary equipment and survival skills to spend the night outdoors if you cannot reach or locate the yurt.** Lost Creek yurt location is N 46.76268°, W 89.67665°

In the event of an emergency, assistance may be available from snowmobilers traveling on the South Boundary Road snowmobile trail, which is approximately 0.8 km/0.5 miles south of the Lost Creek yurt.

#### **Suggested route:**

- 1) Park in the upper lot of the ski area, pick up the Big Hemlock Trail cross country ski trail by crossing in front of the chalet and continuing west, the trail begins just downhill of the loading area of the double chairlift.
- 2) Follow the Big Hemlock Trail cross country ski trail approximately 4.5 km/2.8 miles to the point where the Government Peak Trail summer hiking trail and the Big Hemlock cross country ski trail diverge; this point may be difficult to locate, as it is not identified by a sign; you will need to rely on your map and look for clues such as trail tags, a packed trail left by previous winter travelers or natural landmarks.
- 3) **From here to the yurt you will be traveling on hiking trails which are not packed or groomed for winter use.** Hiking trails are marked with blue trail tags, and hiking trail junctions may be marked with signs. Both the trail tags and the junction signs may become covered with snow, damaged by falling trees or otherwise obscured. **Be prepared for cross-country travel in the event you lose the trail or cannot find the trail.**
- 4) Next, follow the Government Peak Trail hiking trail a distance of 4.2 km/2.6 miles to the junction with the Lost Lake Trail. This trail section gains significant elevation as it travels south. (The junction with the Union Spring Trail hiking trail marks the half-way point on this leg of the trek).
- 5) From the junction of the Government Peak Trail hiking trail and the Lost Lake Trail hiking trail, follow the Lost Lake Trail south a distance of 4.8 km/3 miles. This section of the route contains several steep hills. A side trail marked with a sign leads to the yurt. If the sign is missing or obscured, you will need to search for the yurt on the east side of Lost Creek approximately 2.4 km/1.5 miles south of Lost Lake, and 0.8 km/0.5 miles north of the South Boundary Road, which is a snowmobile trail from December through March. You will have to cross Lost Creek to get to the yurt - use caution during high water.

#### **START EARLY**

Start early and allow ample travel time to reach your yurt. Daylight is short in the winter; in December, sunset is just after 5:00 pm eastern time. Once you arrive at the yurt, you will need some daylight to dig out the yurt and toilet. Ski trails may not be groomed and hiking trails are not groomed at all. Whether on skis or snowshoes, deep snow can slow your progress to one mile per hour or less.

#### **ON THE TRAIL**

Do not allow your party to become separated. All trip participants should have a park map, ski trail map, compass and USGS quadrangle maps of the area. This is extremely important in bad weather or poor visibility. Stay together and stay safe. Travel at a pace which is comfortable for the slowest member of the party. If one member becomes exhausted, your entire party is weakened as a result. A slow, steady pace is the safest way of traveling in the wilderness. Take turns breaking trail in deep snow.

#### **CONDITION OF YURT UPON ARRIVAL**

It is possible that a yurt can be damaged by extreme weather conditions, which are common in upper Michigan. High winds, heavy snow fall, falling tree branches, and accumulation of snow on the yurt's walls could cause rips, tears and/or partial or total collapse. These possibilities point out the need to **be prepared with the necessary equipment and survival skills to spend the night outdoors if needed.**

## DIGGING OUT YURTS

It is important to keep the yurts dug out on a regular basis. We ask that everyone using the yurts pitch in and help keep them snow free.

1. To remove snow, start by shoveling the deck and stairs and then the snow away from the sides. Be extremely careful when using the shovel. The shovel can easily tear the canvas covering of the yurt.
2. The snow will likely slide off the yurt once it has warmed up. **Please do not use a shovel on the yurt roof, this may tear or damage it.**
3. It is very important to keep the deck snow and ice-free so there is not a build up of ice and compacted snow.
4. At the completion of your stay, replace the snow shovels on their hooks. If you leave them in the yurt, the next party may not be able to dig out the yurt door.

## ITEMS AT THE YURT

At each yurt, you should find (2) bunk beds, (1) table, benches or chairs, (1) two-burner propane stove, (1) woodstove, (1) wood rack, (1) ash bucket, assorted silverware, plates bowls, and cups, (1) water bucket, assorted cooking pots and pans, miscellaneous kitchen equipment, (1) mop, (1) broom, (1) dust pan, (1) buck saw, (1) axe, (1) dome opener, (1) smoke alarm and (1) fire extinguisher. Located outside are a primitive toilet, fire pit, picnic table, and woodpile. We cannot guarantee all the items listed will be in the yurt. Because of the remote location, it may take a day or two to replace/repair the item(s). Be prepared and adaptable to survive without these items.

## STOVES

Each yurt has a woodstove and a two-burner propane stove. You should bring at least one bottle of propane for each night of your stay. The propane stove uses standard screw-in disposable propane fuel bottles. Carefully read the directions on the stove. Pack out empty fuel bottles.

### Warnings on Propane Use:

- Always make sure valves for the stove are turned off when not in use.
- Attach or detach cylinders away from ignition sources and only when stove is cool to the touch.
- Propane is heavier than air and will accumulate in low places. If you smell gas, ventilate the area and leave immediately.
- Never store propane bottles near the woodstove or where the temperature exceeds 120°F.

### Woodstove Directions: DO NOT CUT OR SPLIT WOOD IN THE YURT OR ON THE YURT DECK.

1. Place 1 or 2 sheets of loosely crumpled newspaper in the stove and cover with thumb-size dry kindling.
2. Light the newspaper and leave the door slightly ajar (1/8 inch) until all kindling is burning and a hot coal bed is established. Slowly add larger pieces. Lay pieces lengthwise on the hot coal bed with a shallow trench between so the air can flow directly into the trench and ignite the fuel above. When the fire seems to be at its peak, medium-sized logs may be added. Once these logs catch fire slowly close the door and adjust the draft on the door to the desired burning rate.
3. A small, hot fire is more efficient than a large, smoldering fire.
4. Do not overfill the stove with wood in an effort to keep it going all night. You will need to get up and put wood into it every 3 or 4 hours.
5. Park staff will clean out ashes as necessary.
6. Don't burn garbage or plastics because they leave a toxic, sticky residue in the chimney, which can cause a chimney fire.

## OPENING, CLOSING AND DAILY PROCEDURES

It is important to follow these procedures. A checklist is posted in the yurts for your convenience. There is minimal staff to operate and maintain the yurts, so we trust that your group will assist us in keeping the yurts in good condition for the next group.

### When You Arrive:

1. Find the snow shovel hanging outside. Shovel snow away from the sides of the yurt and deck skirting. Be careful not to damage the canvas sidewalls with the shovel. Shovel entire entrance deck
2. Shovel snow off the woodpile.
3. Pack a path to the toilet. For sanitary reasons, always use the toilet for defecating.
4. Check to make sure the top of the chimney is clear of snow. Please do not climb on the chimney structure because it was not designed to handle the extra weight.
5. **Do not force open the plastic dome when covered by snow, frozen shut, or open it during high winds.** When closing, do not over tighten the dome as this may cause it to crack allowing water in.

### Daily Procedures:

1. The yurt is a **no smoking** building.
2. At night, bring in the yurt equipment (broom, axe etc.) so they don't get lost during a snowstorm.
3. Please wipe up any excess moisture on the floors with the mop provided.

### Procedures When You Leave:

Thoroughly clean the yurt, even under the beds. Sweep up all dirt, wood chips and snow. Carry out all garbage and food; leaving them in the yurt will encourage rodents or other animals to chew their way into the yurt. Wipe down the table. Place all cooking pots/pans/bowls upside down in "chuck wagon" box on the yurt deck so that water does not freeze in them. **Pack out what you packed in.** Move any flammable materials such as paper and kindling away from wood stove.

1. Restock the yurt with wood and kindling from woodpile so the next group will have dry wood when they enter.
2. Wipe down the toilet seat, close seat cover and sweep out snow.
3. Make sure gas valves are turned off on the propane stove.
4. Make sure plastic dome is securely shut.
5. Remove snow and ice from the entire entrance deck and steps.
6. Hang up the snow shovel outside.
7. Make sure the woodpile is covered with the tarp.
8. Securely shut yurt door and make sure it is locked.

### SAFETY

Everything you do on a wilderness tour should be done carefully. **In the wilderness you are responsible for yourself and your group's safety.** Use common sense and care when using the wood stove, propane stove, starting the fire, chopping wood, etc. There is no ski patrol in the backcountry and it's an hour or more to the nearest hospital. The closest public telephone is at the Park Headquarters; in case of an emergency use this phone to call 911. Cell phone coverage is poor across most of the park, but you may be able to obtain coverage by going to higher ground. You and your party must come prepared. Wilderness travel in winter requires everyone to take personal responsibility to do everything they can to be safe. It is important to stay alert and to constantly evaluate and minimize potential hazards. It is a good idea to have someone on the trip with wilderness first aid skills.

### SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT LIST

The equipment list below is a guide to help you prepare for a yurt trip. Remember, be prepared to spend the night outdoors if you can not make it to the yurt, or if you find the yurt damaged or collapsed. Dressing in layers is the best choice. As you get warm you can take off layers, and as you cool down during breaks, you can put them back on. Select clothing that will wick away sweat keeping you feeling dry and warm. Cotton clothing should not be worn because cotton holds moisture against your skin, increasing the risk of hypothermia.

#### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ sleeping bag
- ☐ backpack
- ☐ sunglasses
- ☐ off-trail Nordic skis or snowshoes
- ☐ ski poles
- ☐ Nordic ski boots or insulated pack boots
- ☐ headlamp and small flashlight
- ☐ lighter, matches in waterproof container, and fire starters
- ☐ basic first aid kit
- ☐ high-energy trail snacks
- ☐ plastic emergency whistle
- ☐ large water bottle
- ☐ compass, ski trail map, park map and USGS quadrangle maps
- ☐ small knife
- ☐ toothbrush and paste
- ☐ long underwear (top and bottom)
- ☐ socks
- ☐ gloves
- ☐ wool or polar fleece mittens with waterproof shell
- ☐ polar fleece or down jacket
- ☐ wool or polar fleece long-sleeve shirt
- ☐ wool, polar fleece or synthetic long pants
- ☐ wool, polar fleece or synthetic knit hat
- ☐ breathable windproof/waterproof shell jacket and hood
- ☐ breathable windproof/waterproof shell ski pants
- ☐ knee-high gaiters
- ☐ slippers or down booties
- ☐ personal medications
- ☐ watch

#### GROUP EQUIPMENT:

- ☐ yurt key and yurt permit
- ☐ one screw-on type one pound propane fuel cylinder per day
- ☐ avalanche shovel to dig emergency shelter
- ☐ toilet paper
- ☐ paper towels
- ☐ sun screen
- ☐ tent or tarp to serve as emergency shelter
- ☐ group first aid kit